

rates. And under his leadership, agency efficiency's improved, and America's small-business community has found a trusted friend and partner.

During his tenure at SBA, Steve has managed loan guarantee programs that are similar in structure to those run by the Federal Housing Administration, and he's made these programs run very effectively. When Steve took the reins at the SBA, he streamlined the agency's efforts to disburse loans to small businesses and homeowners devastated by Hurricane Katrina. He matched every loan applicant with a case manager to provide the compassion and expertise that applicants needed to navigate the loan process.

Within months of Steve's reforms, the backlog of loans fell 80 percent and response times improved by 90 percent. Today, more than \$6 billion in SBA loans are helping more than 160,000 gulf coast families rebuild their homes, their businesses, and their lives.

Steve Preston is an experienced manager who knows what to do. He knows how to tackle a problem, devise a solution, and get results. That's exactly the kind of leadership I was looking for. And that's why I'm going to send his name up to the United States Senate to be the Department's Secretary.

He will play a central role in helping address our Nation's housing challenges. He'll work with Members of Congress to advance responsible legislation that will help millions of American homeowners. He will be entrusted with one of the most rewarding jobs in the Federal Government: helping our fellow Americans have a place to call a home.

These are important responsibilities, and I'm confident I picked the right person for the job. He's a hard-working, dedicated professional. In fact, he was confirmed to his current post by the United States Senate without a single vote in opposition. Let's hope the streak continues. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Deputy Secretary Roy Bernardi. I appreciate very much your willingness to step forward to serve the country as well as to serve as Acting Secretary of HUD. And I thank you for keeping that position until Steve is confirmed.

I also want to thank Steve's family: Molly, as well as Anna, Madeleine, Gibson, Eleanor, and Steve, Jr. Thank you all for coming to

the White House to witness this very important moment.

I ask the Senate to quickly consider Steve Preston and to ratify him on a timely basis. Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Preston.

Statement on the Appointment of Douglas V. O'Dell, Jr., as Coordinator of Gulf Coast Region Recovery and Rebuilding

April 18, 2008

Today I am pleased to select Major General Doug O'Dell to serve as Coordinator of Federal support for the recovery and rebuilding of the gulf coast.

General O'Dell is an innovative problem-solver with a wealth of experience in helping the people of the gulf coast region. As the commanding general of the 4th Marine Division in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, he employed over 2,700 marines and sailors to evacuate thousands of civilians, deliver essential cargo, and restore basic functions in more than 30 buildings. His strategic judgment during Hurricane Rita enabled troops to deliver relief almost immediately after the storm. He has earned the trust of many in the region, including State and local officials, and is the right person for this important job.

General O'Dell understands the progress made in the gulf coast region, the important work ahead, and the great spirit of the people who call that region home. He will build on the efforts of Don Powell to help the people of the region continue to rebuild their lives and their communities. I also want to thank Paul Conway for doing a fine job as Interim Coordinator.

I am pleased to announce as well that I have signed an Executive order to extend the Federal Coordinator position until February 28, 2009. This extension will ensure a seamless transition into the next administration so that the Federal Government can continue

to deliver effective, integrated, and responsible support to the people of the gulf coast region.

Message on the Observance of Passover, 5768

April 18, 2008

Then Moses said to the people, "Commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand."

Exodus 13:3

I send greetings to those observing Passover.

More than 3,000 years ago, God liberated the Children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and led them on a journey towards the Promised Land. During the holy days of Passover, Jews around the world celebrate this deliverance from oppression and give thanks to a loving God for His many blessings. Passover is an opportunity for Jewish families and friends to gather to read the Haggadah, share the Seder meal, and remember God's mercy through song and prayer. This eight-day observance brings a message of hope and freedom to the Jewish people.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Passover.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Executive Order 13463—Amending Executive Orders 13389 and 13390

April 18, 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5121–5206), it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Executive Order 13389 of November 1, 2005, as amended, is further amended:

(a) in subsection 2(a), by striking "Economic Policy" and inserting in lieu thereof "Homeland Security and Counterterrorism"; and

(b) in section 5, by striking "3 years from the date of this order" and inserting in lieu thereof "February 28, 2009".

Sec. 2. Subsection 5(b) of Executive Order 13390 of November 1, 2005, is amended:

(a) by striking the comma after "applicable law" and inserting "and"; and

(b) striking "3 years from the date of this order" and inserting in lieu thereof "February 28, 2009".

George W. Bush

The White House,
April 18, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:34 a.m., April 22, 2008]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 23.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 12

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 13

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

April 14

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

April 15

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he presented the Lifetime President's Volunteer Service Award to S. Truett Cathy. Then,